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555 Kismet Court
Walnut Creek, CA
94596-6828
September 21, 1999

Mr. Lester Snow
Executive Director
CalFed Bay/Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street
Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Snow:

I attended an open hearing in Antioch on September 8, 1999. I thought the presentations by CalFed were fairly good although I did miss most of a video because of traffic delays in getting to the meeting.

As I understand CalFed's program it is to widen the existing channel into Clifton Court Forebay, to replace several temporary flow control barriers with permanent structures and possibly to add other flow control barriers if needed and ecologically sound.

The benefits of these actions is not to increase water availability or water storage but water quality. I may have missed it but I never heard anything quantitative about the improvement in water quality resulting from the above program. My concerns as a member of Clean Water and as a client of Contra Costa Water District is that the quality of our drinking water not degrade and if possible improve.

Here are my general thoughts. The Agricultural interests have basically set water policy in California since the beginning. Because of this the Delta and the Central San Joaquin Valley has suffered irreparable ecological harm. You don't need to be an environmentalist to observe this, just a drive up Highway 99 will reveal entire rivers that have been completely subsumed by Agriculture and domestic water demands. There is no doubt in my mind that the Delta is undergoing a gradual environmental decline as more and more water is being sucked out to satisfy irresponsible Agricultural and domestic water demands. By that I mean Agribusiness that tries to grow high-water consumption crops like cotton in semi-arid areas like the Westlands and domestic water users whose water consumption is not metered.

Although the Delta is a very complex water system at any one time it can be considered as a zero sum situation. The attempt to tap into cleaner river currents (the old river) and remove that water will simply mean less clean water somewhere else and thus environmental degradation somewhere else.

Because of this belief I cannot support your plans for the South Delta in full. It might make sense to replace temporary flow control structures with permanent ones on a strictly economic basis. Widening the channel to the CCWD Rock Slough offtake pumps and Las Vaqueros Reservoir offtake pumps may improve CCWD drinking water quality but it will come at the expense of other areas in the Delta. I cannot support that.

I think CalFed has got to put the environment needs first and displace the Agricultural interests from that position which they have occupied from the start and continue to occupy. Unless I am convinced that is CalFed's mission then I must withhold my support and approval.

Yours sincerely,

Gordon A. Topham

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Topham", written in a cursive style.